



**Office of the Devon and Cornwall
Police and Crime Commissioner**

Communications and engagement strategy
April 2019-March 2020

Police and crime commissioner's duty to consult

The police and crime commissioner (PCC) has a clear duty to seek the views of local communities as set out in several pieces of legislation.

The Police Act 1996 sets out a statutory duty to 'consult with those in that policing area, about the policing of that area.' The Policing and Crime Act 2009 and Community Engagement and Membership Regulations 2010 adds the requirement to 'have regard to the views of people in the authority's area about policing in that area.'

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act expands upon these duties and confers additional duties to the PCC. These duties are listed in more detail at appendices A and B.

Whenever the PCC makes a decision about improving or changing services or altering the police precept they need to be

confident the decision is properly informed by public opinion.

This document sets out the principles that should underpin consultation and engagement with the people of Devon and Cornwall, stakeholders and other partners.

It is based on a code of good practice which seeks to define what is categorised as 'public engagement' and what is considered to be 'formal consultation'.

What is consultation?

The code of good practice defines consultation as a process of dialogue with citizens and stakeholders, which has a defined start and end date, and informs a decision about a new proposal, policy, or service change.

Longer-term engagement work carried out by the OPCC is not covered by the code but the main aim of this strategy is to outline a plan for its delivery.

Public engagement

Public engagement aims to bring people and communities together to address issues of common importance, to solve shared problems and to bring about positive social change.

It allows citizens to get involved in public issues so that leaders and decision makers better understand their perspectives, opinions and concerns.

When done well it includes those members of the community whose voices have traditionally been left out of political and policy debates.

Moreover it:

- helps people weigh a variety of perspectives and listen to each other's views
- builds common understanding, manages differences and establishes direction for moving ahead on tough issues
- builds trust and improves communication between the public and leaders

- creates new opportunities for citizens to become involved in public problem solving and decision making

All public engagement, digital or face to face is considered providing it supports and is relevant to the OPCC priorities, which are:

- A. Connecting communities and policing
- B. Preventing and deterring crime
- C. Protecting people at abuse and those who are vulnerable
- D. Supporting victims and witnesses and helping them get justice
- E. Getting the best out of the police

General principles

Communications resources will be used effectively and efficiently to support the OPCC and its partners in delivery of the Police and Crime Plan and to promote awareness of the office, its aims and its strategic direction.

Our aspiration is to result in a public that is better informed about the police, the

force's funding and functions and how people in the force area can help us shape strategy.

By using the engagement methods below we will build engaged communities across Devon and Cornwall including residents, partners and businesses.

The OPCC needs to demonstrate to the public that it is/can provide the solution to problems they experience with policing. (For example, 101 waiting times, local crime related issues used to set the priorities in the Police and Crime Plan).

Communications and engagement must assist those whose job it is to hold the office to account.

It will:

- Keep people up to date with news, events and achievements of the PCC
- Encourage and inspire conversations about policing and safety issues across the counties

- Encourage attendance at meetings and involvement with PCC projects
- Improve the public impact on PCC actions
- Contribute to a greater understanding of the work of PCCs
- Reinforce the office's values (Appendix E)

Transparency

The OPCC is committed to transparency of its work – performance reports and information will be made available regularly through the year on the OPCC website and the public will be helped in their understanding of the office and its work by the communications team.

Communications and engagement methods

Established media

In a fast-paced, 24-hour news cycle the OPCC must be accessible, swiftly responsive to media inquiries and mindful of deadlines.

We need to be open and transparent with the media. We should try our best to wholly answer questions and provide supplementary data wherever possible.

Communications and engagement staff should actively develop effective working relationships with journalists.

Effort must be made to produce material to the standards required by the media and with regard to deadlines.

Social media

Social media represents an opportunity to engage directly with an audience and respond to their questions and challenges.

In order to engage effectively with social media audiences our posts need to be informative, creative and thought provoking. Legitimate questions and messages should be answered honestly and swiftly.

Regular monitoring of social media performance must take place to ensure platforms are used efficiently and effectively. Communications and engagement staff will be challenged to create more engaging digital content, to assess new platforms and opportunities and to increase audience levels significantly year on year.

An annual communications and engagement delivery plan will evaluate social media performance for year-on-year comparison.

Councillor advocate scheme

The councillor advocate scheme is open to all councillors (and some non-councillors who have linked to councils) in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Councillor advocates are to be kept informed of key developments in OPCC or force policy and

asked to attend quarterly seminars and events in their area.

The communications and engagement team will manage the scheme and work towards achieving an even spread of advocates across the force area.

Face to face

The OPCC has continued to develop its approach to public engagement, with particular regard to the connectivity agenda.

The office diary of events will be shared – and updates sent regularly, to senior connectivity leads within the force and to inspectors ahead of events in their areas. We will again extend an offer to others within the police family – Devon and Cornwall Crime Watch Associations, Crimestoppers, Citizens in Policing (Rural Specials), Highways Agency and Stop Hate UK – to attend these events alongside us.

Face to face public engagement will take place through five primary schemes:

1. Meet your police

- Community safety - We will work with community safety partners in Devon and Cornwall to hold a series of events in areas of high footfall, to talk about community safety issues. These will be attended by OPCC, police, councils, councillor advocates and third-sector organisations.
 - Rural crime surgeries – Working in collaboration with rural crime constables we will support a series of rural crime surgeries. These will be held at livestock markets and other rural locations where farmers and other businesses are strongly represented.
2. Diversity events - The OPCC will work jointly with the force diverse communities teams at diversity events such as Pride, Respect and Blue Light Days. These include Pride events, Respect (faith based) events, and Blue Light Days which support people with learning disabilities. Opportunities to support new events that celebrate diversity will be explored in line with the duties laid out in the Equality Act 2010 (Appendix B).
 3. Meet Your PCC events - The Communications and Engagement team is responsible for organising Meet Your PCC events throughout Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Held approximately once a month these allow members of the public to address the PCC directly and raise questions with them.
 4. District shows/smaller events - The OPCC will expand the number of smaller shows/events attended as they were identified as key times at which to engage with local people within their communities in a cost-effective way. We will extend an offer to others within the police family – Devon and Cornwall Crime Watch Associations, Crimestoppers, Citizens in Policing (Rural Specials), Highways Agency and Stop Hate UK – to attend these events alongside us.
 5. Talks - Community engagement workers, each with a responsibility for a specific geography within the force area, have been recruited to represent the OPCC at various events. They have been encouraged to give talks to community groups in their areas following a successful trial. The OPCC is regularly approached to speak to groups such as Women’s Institutes, Probus Clubs, Rotary etc. and wherever possible these opportunities are to be embraced.

Newsletter

The PCC’s newsletter is now distributed via the Force’s community messaging system once a month, giving it a potential audience of about 40,000 subscribers who are engaged with policing issues.

The communications and engagement team will maximise this opportunity to communicate via the newsletter to communicate priority messages.

Advertising

Paid-for advertising and sponsorship opportunities may provide value for money and should be explored, particularly when they have the potential to improve outcomes for victims of crime or are clearly in the public interest.

Communications plans

A framework yearly plan will be created to include support for annual events (Respect, Pride etc) and key dates (such as announcement of precept increase).

Key communications opportunities will be identified in line with the PCC's priorities and full communications plans will be created for these.

Communications plans will identify key messages, media partners, required assets and key facts.

Surveys

Digital surveys can provide a cost-effective, quantitative method of testing public opinion on a range of issues. The OPCC will attempt to limit the number of surveys to a

maximum of three a year to maximise the chance of participation and completion.

Risk and assumptions

This strategy is prepared making a number of assumptions in regards to senior management support, resource and budget.

Key risks to delivery are:

- A. A significant event which would change priorities;
- B. Re-prioritisation of budget;
- C. Loss of events vehicle.

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References

[The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act: 2011](#)

[The Equality Act 2010](#)

[The Devon and Cornwall OPCC Communications and Engagement Delivery Plan 2019-20](#)